

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 02697 111810Z  
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13  
EB-08 /086 W  
-----072764 120738Z /16

R 110851Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7971  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2697

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4  
TAGS: PINT, SY  
SUBJ: ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMITTEE SPUTTERING OUT

1. PRESIDENT ASSAD'S CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN UP CORRUPTION IN SYRIA, WHICH WAS LAUNCHED WITH SO MUCH FANFARE LATE LAST SUMMER, APPEARS TO BE QUIETLY FADING INTO OBLIVION. NURI AL-HUSSEINI, A NOTED SYRIAN JURIST, BAATHIST, AND CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF THE CIVIL COURT OF APPEALS, TOLD POLOFF THAT THE DIAB COMMITTEE THIS WEEK WOULD HAVE TO EITHER BRING OFFICIAL CHARGES IN COURT AGAINST THOSE IT WAS DETAINING AND/OR INVESTIGATING OR HAVE THE CASES DISMISSED. ALL THE BUSINESSMEN WHO WERE ARRESTED HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN RELEASED AFTER PAYING SIZEABLE "BAIL." HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO HUSSEINI, A NUMBER OF MANAGERS OF STATE COMPANIES ARE STILL BEING HELD.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 02697 111810Z

ANOTHER LAWYER, HAZEM JAZZAR, ALSO TOLD US RECENTLY THAT SEVERAL MILITARY OFFICERS WERE STILL BEING DETAINED. DECISION WAS MADE TO CHARGE A FEW OF THOSE ARRESTED IN REGULAR CIVIL COURTS AS OPPOSED TO SPECIAL ECONOMIC COURTS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, CHARGE WOULD BE MISDEMEANOR AND SENTENCE WOULD BE FAIRLY LIGHT FINE.

2. HUSSEINI WAS CRITICAL OF THE ENTIRE AFFAIR. HE CLAIMED THAT DIAB, WHOM HE RESPECTED AND HELD IN HIGH REGARD, HAD OFFERED HIM THE NUMBER TWO POSITION ON THE COMMITTEE AS THE RESULT "OF OUR CLOSE FRIENDSHIP AND MY EXPERIENCE IN PROSECUTING CIVIL CASES" (HUSSEINI FORMERLY SERVED AS DAMASCUS ATTORNEY GENERAL). HE SAID HE REFUSED DIAB'S OFFER BECAUSE HE WAS SURE THAT THE COMMITTEE WOULD FAIL. EVENTS HAD BORNE OUT HIS PREDICTION. THE POWER OF THESE INVOLVED HAD PREVENTED THE INVESTIGATION FROM GOING FURTHER, AND THE BUSINESSMEN ARRESTED HAD PROVED TOO CLEVER FOR THE INVESTIGATORS. HUSSEINI CLAIMED THEY WERE PAST MASTERS AT OBTAINING FAKE DOCUMENTS FROM THOSE WITH WHOM THEY DID BUSINESS ABROAD. HE PREDICTED THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR WOULD BE GLOSSED OVER AT THE NEXT REGIONAL BAATH PARTY CONGRESS.

3. COMMENT: NEWS OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK HAS SELDOM BEEN MENTIONED BY THE SYRIAN MEDIA SINCE NOVEMBER 1977, AND IT HAS LONG SINCE CEASED TO BE A TOPIC OF COCKTAIL CIRCUIT CHITCHAT HERE. WHILE THE COMMITTEE MAY HAVE SCARED SOME BUSINESSMEN AND BUREAUCRATS INTO CLEANING UP THEIR ACT, THE GREATEST EFFECT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO SHAKE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SYRIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WHICH HAD QUIETLY BEEN REPARATING THEIR MONEY AND MAKING INVESTMENTS WITHIN THE COUNTRY. THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS EMBARRASSED THE REGIME IN PUBLIC, AND PENDING CASES ARE LIKELY TO BE QUIETLY DISPOSED OF WHETHER BY DISMISSAL OR CONVICTION. IF IT IS TRUE,  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 02697 111810Z

SEVERAL ASTUTE OBSERVERS OF THE SCENE BELIEVE, THAT THE ENTIRE CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN BECAME A VEHICLE FOR POLITICAL INFIGHTING, PRINCIPALLY BETWEEN RIF'AT AL-ASSAD AND HIS DITRACTORS SUCH AS NAJI JAMIL, THEN WE WOULD HAVE TO AWARD THE CONTEST ON POINTS TO RIF'AT EVEN THOUGH THE AFFAIR SEEMS TO HAVE HAD A SALUBROUS EFFECT ON RIF'AT'S PENCHANT FOR OSTENTATIOUS CONSUMPTION AND CORRUPT PRACTICES.  
PELLETREAU

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CORRUPTION, BUSINESSMEN, COMMITTEES, ARRESTS, INVESTIGATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 11 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978DAMASC02697  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** X4  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780201-0955  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** DAMASCUS  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t19780570/aaaachpm.tel  
**Line Count:** 102  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 622e8ea0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 29 jun 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2726576  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMITTEE SPUTTERING OUT  
**TAGS:** PINT, PGOV, PINS, SY  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/622e8ea0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014